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ABSTRACT

When remedial/developmental programs at community colleges are examined on a national level, four areas of concern are apparent: (1) administrators frequently fail to provide the funding and personnel necessary to meet the needs of a diverse student population; (2) instructors are often intellectually and culturally unprepared to teach developmental students; (3) counselor involvement is often limited to placement activities; and (4) over 50% of developmental students drop out or fail before graduation, but are rarely asked why. Given the background, experience, and problems of developmental students, counselors can play an important role in their search for personal worth, confidence, and self-esteem. In addition to participation in placement, counselors should be involved in personal counseling, group activities and workshops, and in-service teacher training and consultation. However, if counseling services are to be increased in developmental studies programs, care must be taken to provide for a solid curriculum, adequate resources, thorough follow-up and evaluation procedures, and faculty and counselor training and commitment. As examples of two distinct approaches to counselor involvement in developmental education, this paper includes brief discussions of compensatory education in Virginia, where counselors are only minimally involved in promoting student adjustment and in teacher assistance, and in Texas, where counselor involvement in ongoing. (KL)

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THE COUNSELOR'S ROLE IN THE DILEMMA OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENT IN JUNIOR AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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The Counselor's Role in the Dilemma of the Developmental Student in Junior and Community Colleges

The developmental or remedial student has been an achilles heel for the junior and community college for many years (Monroe, 1972). Academicians have questioned the open door policy of junior and community colleges and their effectiveness in today's educational system. Counselors have devoted major interest to the handicapped and emotionally maladjusted student but relatively little effort towards the remedial or developmental student (Riessman, 1968, Roueche, 1968). It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the plight of the developmental student and the role of counselors in more effectively helping these students. Thorton, in his book The Community Junior College, states:

> "A phenomenon of growing importance in the community college is the enrollment of large numbers of students who are not yet prepared to succeed in academic pursuits. Failure to recognize and accept this fact is a major stumbling block to efforts to attain the open-door purposes of the institution" (Thorton, 1972, p. 150).

Developmental Studies

It is time to examine programs which have been in existence for many years and still have shown questionable signs of success. Counselors and teachers need to examine the adequacy of these programs and the steps taken at administrative levels to insure change, attempts at new methods, and evaluation of program components. My contention is that the developmental student is virtually ignored, misunderstood, and viewed as an academic burden rather than as a humanistic challenge. Programs for these students are differentiated among various schools with little guidance from administrations, follow-up studies are

spares at best, and involvement at the local college level may vary considerably. Program components may include special developmental studies curriculum, a few self-taught courses in a learning center with inadequate supervision and attention, or nothing at all (Schenz, 1964).

When examining these programs on a national level, there are four major areas of interest which are apparent: first, there are many educational leaders who believe developmental programs have aestetic value but are willing to contribute little or no money to aid in their development. These programs cross many advantageous barriers such as "the cultural deprived" and/or minority students, high school dropouts, "older" returning students, and previously labeled educational "failures." One must seriously question how community and junior colleges can absolve the weaknesses of previous educational experiences and create viable, successful programs that can satisfy all these groups without adequate funding and personnel.

Secondly, there is an academic community that is generally intellectually and culturally unprepared to teach these students and is often plagued with doubts of even remote success in these programs. Traditional teaching methods prove ineffective and only cause frustration on the part of both instructors and students in developmental programs. As has been the "adopted" procedure in our educational system for many years, the more unprepared faculty members are asked to teach the developmental students since it is viewed as "less rewarding" than teaching more gifted students. Other schools

have used local high school teachers in the programs because regular college faculty were unprepared and untrained to teach these students (Monroe, 1972).

A third area of interest is the counseling staff that gratiously places these students in some type of remedial program, wishes them good luck, and often ignores them until it is too late or until they appear as dropout statistics on admission data sheets. Counselors are also confused and frustrated by the developmental student and feel rejected when their "helping" programs fail. They may feel resentment towards students who ignore traditional academic pursuits and who may reject or "mistrust" the counselor. Developmental students often look at the couselor as an administrator. This creats a difficult double bind situation for a person in the helping professions. Sometimes, counselors have been the person who have informed them of their shortcomings and failings, or discussed their inappropriate behaviors in the classroom.

It is important to consider that the developmental student who enters the junior or community college is "not quite sure" what to expect, often views him/herself as a failure and wants one more try at success. These students may eventually leave more confused, disappointed, and bitter about their college experience. Over half of entering developmental students fail or leave college before graduating. Many drop out within one semester or even a few weeks after school begins. Yet rarely are they asked WHY?

The Role of the Counselor

If there is a student in need of counseling services, it is the developmental student. This is a student wary of education and a system which has branded him/her a failure, background experiences which may be viewed as disadvantaged, and someone who seeks economic and social equality.

> "The unprepared student is one of a race whose previous education has seemed to be degrading, defeating, and pointless and who is nonetheless conviced that access to economic competence requires achievement in further education. This student does not seek but actively rejects middle class concepts and values that the school have so long exemplified. In the past, he/she accepted the evaluations of the schools and went away. More recently, he/she demands that the schools reexamine their pratices and provide a meaningful access to economic rewards. This is a very special challenge to the community colleges to develop imaginative and innovative responses" (Thorton, 1972, p. 151).

It is interesting to note that many developmental studies suffer from emotional and psychological adjustment problems (Roueche, 1968). The counselor can play a very special and active role in this student's search for personal worth, confidence, and self-esteem. This can be accomplished in several ways. Initially, counselors can accept and show genuine interest in developmental students as they enter the community or junior college. Care should be taken when placing a student in a developmental studies program and adequate explanations of these programs should be given. Counselors need to be involved as a major influence in any developmental program by: (a) Providing the opportunity for students to have counseling support services available. This involves meeting students in "their" surroundings rather than waiting for them to knock on the counselor's door (i.e.,

cafeteria, student lounge). This may possibly be the first time anyone has taken a special interest in these students and showed adequate concern with their adjustment and progress in the college environment. (b) Counseling and human relations experiences should be an active part of the developmental studies curriculum. These areas could be endless, including psychology courses, assertiveness training, group process courses, sexuality seminars, etc. (c) Counselors and academic faculty need to work together towards common goals and experiences for each developmental student. Counselors can help faculty become more sensitive to the developmental student and help establish a climate of mutual trust and respect. This can occur through formal training or skill development workshops, faculty meetings and discussions, or in more informal talks and attempts at overcoming difficult problems. The counselor can provide valuable insight into student situations in which a faculty member may be in need of advice. Group counseling programs with both the counselor and faculty member as co-leaders may also be beneficial for both students and school personnel. Counselors need to be more involved and cognizant of the developmental student while providing the initiative and effort necessary for a strong developmental program to properly function.

Rationale and Comparison of Two States and Their Developmental Programs

In order to shed further light on the necessity of a good developmental studies program, I will compare the community colleges of Virginia and Texas and their distinct approaches to this subject.

Like many other states, Virginia developed the community college system as mandated by the legislature so that more citizens could afford and have available the right to higher education. With this viewpoint came a distinct necessity for providing educational development for students who were not successful in previous educational experiences but who, as they became older and matured, wished to take advantage of this new opportunity. A program had to be initiated in order that students could effectively make up and develop the skills necessary for surviving in a two or sometimes four year college environment. Of these students, some needed the skills necessary to pass basic community college courses in math and English in order to complete vocational or technological programs while others wished to proceed on to four year colleges or universities.

In doing so, a problem which plagues all developmental programs readily becomes apparent. How much training can these programs provide? For whom can these programs be effective?

The Virginia Community College system is still determining the answers to these questions. True, it is impossible to have a developmental program which is a panacea for all students who have experienced failure in the traditional educational system. However, placing students in a developmental program may "label" them <u>again</u> as failures and cause a resistance to adequate learning. This entails a double bind situation where many students want to be place in college level courses and yet do not have the necessary skills for success (Scheffler, 1969).

In Virginia, students are placed in developmental programs according to past grades and academic history. This decision is made by a counselor, but his/her involvement normally stops at this point. Students are placed under the auspices of a "learning center" which coordinates classes and media materials to help in the learning process of these students. They may choose to participate in regular classroom lectures regarding subject matter or they may work at their own pace while completing specific learning modules provided through the use of video and media equipment. Often faculty trained in traditional desciplines teach the developmental courses, for which they are both academically unprepared and dissatisfied in doing so.

There are several problems inherent in the Virginia model. First, little follow-up of students in the program is initiated after they are enrolled. This may lead to high drop-out rates with little questioning. In conjuction with this, there is sparce follow-up data of developmental student drop-outs after they leave the college environment. Secondly, academic faculty are not trained nor are they willing to teach these classes. Particular teaching skills are inherent to a successful program. These skills are normally part of reading education or mathematics education programs and no in the Ph.D. training programs in traditional English and mathematics. Besides knowledge of new teaching techniques, an awareness of student self-concept in relation to achievement in a developmental studies program is an important criteria. Experience in secondary school teaching can also be helpful because it would be valuable in

establishing the necessary academic rapports needed to relate to students whose skills are not fully developed. Thirdly, counselors are only minimally involved in helping these students adjust to college environment and in helping faculty better relate to their students and more adequately coping with their frustrations as teachers.

The developmental program exhibited by the Texas system appears to be more thorough. After admitting students into the program, counselors remain actively involved. Students are regularly seen by the counseling staff and their progress is assessed and discussed. Helping programs for faculty are also given regularly. Group work involving a faculty member, students, and a counselor are an integral component of the program. In a group situation, problems can be openly discussed and the self-concept of the student can be explored and increased in a positive fashion.

Recently, at several Texas community colleges, counselors have developed a novel program for developmental students. Created specifically for those students who have the potential to succeed at four year colleges and universities, it incorporates the normal developmental program with several human relations college-transfer courses. In addition to this, counselors actively initiate group counseling experiences throughout the program. Input from several colleges involved in this program indicate that the success rate of developmental studies acquiring the skills needed to transfer to the two year and four year college programs have increased. The additional counseling staff needed to develop and implement this

program has proven to be worthwhile and has become a valuable selling points to students interested in attempting to enroll at these community colleges. It also has increased full-time enrollment and maintained faculty positions for those involved in the developmental studies program.

Concerns and Conclusions

If counseling services are increased in developmental studies programs, there are inherent leadership difficulties which must be faced to make these programs viable and educationally worthwhile. These include: (a) that the administration of the community and junior colleges provide a solid curriculum and suitable framework for these programs. Adequate funding, teachers, equipment, and facilities need to be uniform throught the nation. (b) There is a need for thorough folow-up studies to examine these programs. For instance, you cannot justify a fully functioning developmental program id you do not know what works or why drop-out rates are high. (c) The academic community needs to be more sensitive and aware of these programs. Faculty should have specific training to work with these students and exhibit important teaching characteristics including the capacity to accept cultural differences and the ability to understand the dilemna of the developmental student. The developmental studies program needs as much faculty commitment as other school programs especially since traditional teaching methods may prove ineffective or inadequate. These programs require a careful examination and implementation or viable nontraditional experiential educational

alternatives such as audio and video teaching devices, college field trips and out of school experiences, and personal experimentation on behalf of faculty with human relations training.

In conclusion, developmental studies programs in the junior and community colleges have often proven to be inadequate in their present format. Counselors need to play a more active role both with the lives of these students and the academic and/or social dilemma in which the developmental student is involved. For too long, conselors have relatively neglected these students.

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